

August 9, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Employees

FROM: R. J. Dominic //s// *R. J. Dominic*
Director, Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Advisory 05-1 (Foreign Travel Processing Requirements)

This advisory issues three new foreign travel directives and serves as a reminder of the requirements for processing foreign travel. Currently, Ann Kebeck, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), processes all NMFS foreign travel packages, and Elissa Kelsey, NOAA Travel Office (NTO), processes all other foreign travel packages.

New foreign travel directives

- Effective immediately, all employees traveling outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) on official travel **must** obtain an official passport with the exception of travel between the United States (U.S.) and U.S. territories including American Samoa, Guam, Midway Island, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Wake Island. The new requirements dictate that employees traveling to or from the Caribbean, Bermuda, Mexico, and Canada are now required to have a passport to enter or re-enter the United States. (Reference: <http://www.travel.state.gov/passport> - click on “New Requirements for Travelers Between the United States and the Western Hemisphere.”)
- Effective September 1, 2005, official passport applications must be completed and processed online (<http://www.travel.state.gov/passport>) at the Department of State (DOS) website. Please note the following:
 - Only “DS” forms are accepted by DOS and all “DSP” forms are currently being rejected.
 - Handwritten applications will not be accepted on or after September 1, 2005, unless the applicant is in a remote area without access to a computer; and
 - Print out and submit only one-sided pages of the application.
- In order to ensure a smooth foreign travel process, we have established a foreign travel contact and backup contact in each of the Line and Staff Offices. See attached listing.

Effective immediately, foreign travel inquiries should be directed initially to those designated for your Line/Staff Office as the contact. Foreign travel packages should be submitted through the appropriate contact to the NTO. The NTO will notify the contact, via e-mail, of any missing documentation or information.

Requirements for processing foreign travel:

Since our goal is to provide the best possible foreign travel service for NOAA, it is important to send the NTO and NMFS **complete** foreign travel packages for processing (Reference: NOAA Travel Regulation (NTR) 306-3.2). Submitting an incomplete foreign travel package will cause processing delays which could ultimately result in a canceled trip. A **complete** foreign travel package consists of:

- two copies of an approved travel authorization with order number assigned by the Line/Staff Office. **NOTE: The employee's grade, date of birth, and title must be annotated in the "Remarks" section of the travel authorization;**
- a fully completed "Foreign Travel Checklist" (Reference: NTR, Chapter 306-7.1);
- a signed and dated copy of the "Foreign Defensive Travel Briefing Acknowledgment Statement." **NOTE: This statement must be signed, dated, and submitted to the NTO or NMFS annually.** ; and
- any passport applications, passports, photos, visa applications, and letters of invitation, if applicable.

NTR, Chapter 306-3.6 requires adequate processing time for the NTO and NMFS to process foreign travel packages. Processing time requirements for passports and visas are dictated by the DOS and the embassies, and have changed substantially since the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. In order to ensure timely processing of foreign travel packages, please allow:

- 4 to 6 weeks to process applications for official passports. Passport applications submitted with less than 4 weeks processing time must include an emergency expedite letter addressed to Ms. Battie Stewart, DOS, Chief, Official Travel. Passport applications, DS-82, are available at www.travel.state.gov. Please read the instructions carefully, including the new requirements for passport photos, which can be found at <http://www.ofa.noaa.gov/~finance/travel.html>.
- 7 business days prior to departure on travel when passports and visas are not needed.
- 10 to 15 business days, for most countries, to obtain each visa.
- 15 to 20 business days to obtain visas for China, Russia, and Vietnam.
- 2 months processing time to obtain a visa for Cuba.

Current visa applications may be obtained at www.traveldocs.com or at www.travel.state.gov (under Consular Information Sheets). If you are unable to locate the appropriate visa application at these websites, call or email the NTO and NMFS for assistance. Completed visa applications, including original signature, must accompany foreign travel packages when submitted for processing. A visa cannot be obtained without a signed, official passport. Most countries require that the passport be valid at least 6 months or longer beyond the dates of travel.

DOS security requirements dictate that all official passports must be returned to the NTO or NMFS for safekeeping in NOAA's official passport repository upon completion of foreign travel. Offices that have blanket travel or frequent foreign travel may retain official passports in a locked safe. **Official passports must never be kept at home.**

Upon leaving Government service, all valid or expired official passports **MUST** be returned to the NTO for cancellation. Employees who wish to retain their official passport as a souvenir must return the official passport with a note to the NTO. The NTO will forward the passport to the DOS for cancellation. After cancellation, the official passport will be returned to the traveler. **Official passports are the property of the Government, and are not the personal property of the traveler.**

For verification of visa requirements or questions concerning this advisory, please contact Elissa Kelsey of the NTO on (301) 444-2107, or Ann Kebeck of NMFS on (301) 713-0155.

Attachment

FOREIGN TRAVEL CONTACTS

August 1, 2005

NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE (NOS) Kathryn Rhoden Anita Minnifield	OFFICE OF OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH (OAR) Cherreceitta Taylor Carolyn McDonald
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE (NWS) Jan Jones Earline Briscoe	NOAA MARINE AND AVIATION OPERATIONS (NMAO) Lori Bast Kristy Wheless
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES (NMFS) Ann Kebeck Marlena Bowman	UNDER SECRETARY AND ASSOCIATE OFFICES (USAO) Linda Lawhorn-Brown Kathy Lewis
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE, DATA, AND INFORMATION SERVICE (NESDIS) Marian Katz Shelly Thompson	NOAA CORPS Jeanette McDonald
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (CFO) Gail Perry	CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (CAO) Cynthia Burley
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER (CIO) Gwen Jones	ACQUISITION AND GRANTS OFFICE Denise Tyler
WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT (WFMO) Karen Tower	INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT Judy Allen
PROGRAM ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION Kevin S. Amos	